Do they get to say something?
Muslim organizations’ role and importance in the public media discourse on Muslims and Islam in Europe

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Abstract
International terrorism, changing immigration flows and the success of populist right-wing parties have increased public attention for issues concerning immigration and intercultural relations in Western Europe. In the current debate on Muslims and Islam, a recurring claim is that the main interested party, i.e. the Muslims themselves, has almost no saying in the public media discourse.

This paper analyzes the discursive networks of actors in the public media debate on Islam and Muslims in the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Switzerland and the Netherlands. Adopting a comparative perspective, we want to look at Muslim organizations’ importance and their interaction with state actors in the public media discourse.

By combining quantitative media content analysis and social network analysis, this paper builds on a growing methodological literature claiming that social network analysis tools can considerably broaden the interpretation of data obtained through quantitative content analysis. The original database stems from the Eurislam project (www.eurislam.eu) and contains data on public media debates on Muslims and Islam from 1999 to 2008.

We find that there is a wide range of communication patterns in the public media discourse on Muslims and Islam, which cannot only depend on differing communication strategies on the part of Muslim organizations. We therefore suggest that there is a need to look beyond single actors when analyzing interest groups’ presence in the media. Indeed, actors do not make their claims in total isolation, but develop strategies towards other actors participating in the debate. As a consequence, we strongly advocate discursive network analysis as a very useful tool to capture the dynamics between actors in public discourse.

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Introduction

In the current debate on Muslims and Islam in Western Europe, it is often claimed that Muslims are not able to get a word in edgeways (Tunger-Zanetti 2013). Indeed, it is mostly non-Muslim actors who depict Muslims as a politically relevant and problematic group in the public media discourse: “[…] the construction of Muslim groups as a politically relevant category is largely done by non-Muslim actors […] other political actors, such as government policy makers, political parties or the news media, employ certain categories or identifications in public debate […]” (Ruedin and Berkhout 2012:1-2; see also Poole and Richardson 2006). As a consequence, reporting in the mainstream media is often one-sided and the media coverage is rather negative (Rigoni 2007). However, there appears to be important cross-national variations between Muslims’ claim-making. Koomen and van Heelsum (2007)’s results show that Muslim actors in the UK stand for a much larger share of claims in national newspapers than they do e.g. in Germany.

Focusing especially on the role of Muslim organizations and state actors such as governments, legislative or executive bodies, this paper explores relation between actors in the public media discourse on Muslims and Islam in five Western European countries. We suggest that the communication patterns in the media differ in the United Kingdom, France, the Netherlands, Germany and Switzerland, Muslim organizations being more or less reactive or proactive in relation to other actors. To what extent do state actors and the civil society interact with Muslim groups when debating Islam-related issues? Are Muslim organizations and groups making their claims exclusively via recognized umbrella organizations? Is the role and presence of the civil society with regard to the media debate on Muslims similar in Germany and in the United Kingdom?

Following Adam (2008), we do not base our study on classical content analysis, but apply social network analysis (SNA) tools to quantitative content data providing from the Eurislam project (Finding a Place for Islam in Europe: Cultural Interactions between Muslim Immigrants and Receiving Societies, eurislam.eu). This methodology called discourse network analysis (DNA) (Janning, et al. 2009) allows one to illustrate relations between actors and to highlight links between actors and content of discourse. With the help of DNA we examine (1) which actors are present in the media debate on Muslims and Islam (2) their relative importance in the debate (3) their role in the dialogues with other actors and (4) on which level (national or local) the debates are conducted. We find that Muslims’ claim-making varies from one national context to another. Even tough the emphasis of this study lies on the exploratory descriptive analysis of dialogue structure in the media, we nevertheless attempt to find explanations for these observed differences in a final section. The differences could indeed depend on Muslims’ organizational structure and strength, on their historical relation to the state, as well as on their access to the media.

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3 Since the concept of discourse is used in many scientific disciplines, definitions differ according to the field of study. In this study, discourse is understood as “[…] groups of statements which structure the way something is thought about, and the way we act on the basis of that thinking” (Riaño and Wastl-Walter 2006:1693). Public discourse is discourse performed in the public realm (Feddersen 2013:6).

In this paper, discourse and debate are used interchangeably.

4 A claim is an expression of a political opinion in the public sphere.
Defining Muslim organizations

Muslim representative bodies are difficult to classify univocally into one kind of organization. They are “[…] something in-between a church, an interest group and a corporatist model that brings together the stakeholders in a particular field […]” (Silvestri 2007:179). The institutionalization of Islam has been highly influenced by the intervention of European governments (Silvestri 2007:173). One the one hand, eager to have an interlocutor between the Muslim community – often perceived as a homogeneous community sharing common values – and state bodies, state actors expect that Islam would comply with the institutionalized organization of the dominant faith groups or churches. Islam should therefore adopt a form of hierarchical organization which allows to have a leader or a spokesperson, enable a better integration of Muslims into society and be representative of the Muslim population living in the country in question (Silvestri 2007:173). A message that emanates from an organization can indeed be perceived as more trustworthy and representative of a community than a statement made by a single individual (Fennema and Tillie 2001, van Heelsum 2004a, van Heelsum 2004b). The emergence of highly organized Muslim actors, especially umbrella organizations, is therefore, first and foremost a top-down dynamic (Silvestri 2007).

One the other hand, existing Muslim organizations claim for official recognition by state actors in order to reach the same status as established faith groups and churches enjoy: “In many areas, state recognition is necessary if [Muslim] organizations are able to involve themselves in matters such as providing religious assistance in hospitals and prisons or offering religious instruction in schools. Such recognition is important symbolically as well […]” (Azzaoui 2008:39-40).

In our analysis, a Muslim organization is an organization that defines itself as being Muslim. Like Bennani-Chraïbi (2011), we use the term “organization” for all kinds of associations or informal groups who mobilize individuals on a voluntary basis in a more or less structured and durable way.

Research design

Scholars recently started to conceive public discourse as a network of actors, representations, frameworks and arguments. Empirical policy studies have integrated the network approach in their theoretical and methodological toolboxes to interpret discursive practices. They analyze the relationship between and among actors interested in the formulation of public policy by paving the way for measuring the mutual relevance of actors implementing it (Jansen 2006; Knoke and Yang 2008). But also sociologists inspired by both Habermas’ communicative action and Foucault’s post-structuralist theory of power adopted network theories to analyze the ideological mechanisms of power and domination (Janning et al. 2009). Hence, political processes are increasingly studied through the description of the symmetrical and asymmetrical discursive interactions of political actors. Thanks to network theories and methodology, the analyses of discourse, especially of the communicative action of Habermas (1981:128) expand to describe and interpret the discursive interaction between subjects. In fact, they help formalizing and quantitatively measuring the presence of actors in public discourse. By applying social network analytical (SNA) tools such as measures for core-periphery distances and equivalence structures, scholars can illustrate the discursive strategy of domination among actors producing public discourse in a more dynamic way. In fact, the network analysis methods allow combining a relevant amount of quantitative data (ties data) with qualitative information concerning actors (attribute data for nodes and ties). As a
consequence, network analysis methods can enlarge discourse analysis by using quantitative analytical instruments. At the same time, network analysis easily integrates qualitative explorations of quantitative data. The research design of this article exploits all advantageous applications of network methods, content theories and discourse analysis and adopts a method called discourse network analysis (DNA) (Janning, et al. 2009).

Data
The original database was established as part of the second work package of the Eurislam project funded by the European Commission 7th Framework Program. Public media debates on Muslims and Islam were coded in six Western European countries in order to gauge the position of actors and their relations with the addressees and the objects of claims. The dataset is a result of automated sampling and qualitative human coding. For each country, national teams selected five national newspapers and sampled from them by Islam/Muslims related keyword searches for the period from 1999 to 2008. Then, researchers coded the claims identifying the claimant, the form or action by which the claim is expressed, the addressee, the content, the object and the framing (Cinalli and Giugni 2013b:133).

We converted the content data concerning claimants and addressees into relational data by transforming the actors into the nodes and the claims into the ties of a network. As Roberts (1997) summarizes, relational content analysis can be semantic as well as based on network content. We perform network analysis by conceiving each claim of an actor as a dialogical act with an addressee. We focus exclusively on the relations between actors and addressees (Wasserman and Faust 1999). The relational act has been transformed in ties between an actor and its addressee in a network perspective. This way, we transformed each national public discourse field in a network in which each node plays a double role (1) as an active actor producing a relational act and (2) as a targeted object receiving, as an addressee, the claims of other actors.

In a fist step, we analyze non-aggregated data. Later, we aggregate the subcategories into four main categories: (1) state actors (governments, legislatures, judiciary, police and security agencies, state executive agencies specifically dealing with migrants, other state executive agencies), (2) political parties, (3) civil society (unions, workers and employees, employers’ organizations and firms, churches, Christians, media and journalists, professional organizations and groups, minority organizations and groups, antiracist organizations and groups, pro-minority rights and welfare organizations and groups, general solidarity, human rights and welfare organizations, racist and extreme right organizations and groups, racist and extreme right organizations and groups, radical left organizations and groups, and (4) Muslim organizations.

Each of the above mentioned groups of actors can either address actors belonging to the same group (e.g. an actor from the civil society addressing another actor from the civil society) or other addressees (e.g. state actors addressing Muslim organizations) or have no defined addressee (e.g. Muslim organizations making a statement not addressing anyone in particular).

To measure the ability of an actor to raise its voice we use the ‘out-degree’ (Freeman 1979) measure, which is the number of directed ties starting from an actor. The out-degree measures the relative weight of a specific actor in the debate. We calculated the percentage of the relative out-degree for each actor excluding unknown actors.

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5 We do not consider the unknown category of actors that “includes undefined groups such as “youth” and “local citizens” that are not suspected to belong to minorities.” (Eurislam WP2 codebook)
OUTactor(a)-add(a) = ([out-degree Actor(a) to Addressee(a)]*100) / (total out-degree national network without unknown actors)

In order to capture the passive or active role of Muslim organizations, we measure the rate between the flow of produced and received claims. We adopt an indicator of dialogue equity (DE) inspired by Adam’s (2008) E-I index. The DE measures the mutual passive and active relational role of Muslim and state organizations in each country. The DE is calculated by subtracting the out-degree from state actors (S) to Muslim organizations (M) from the out-degree from Muslim organizations to state actors and by dividing the result by the total number of ties between Muslim and state actors. DE ranges from -1 to 1, where values approaching 0 imply an even-handed dialogue\(^6\).

\[
\text{DE} = \frac{\text{[out-degree M to S]} - \text{[out-degree S to M]}}{\text{total out-degree M + S}}
\]

*The presence of Muslim organizations in the national public discourse on Muslims and Islam*

Adopting a network perspective, we consider the actors of the media content analysis as active nodes of networks. Figure 1 shows the out-degree of the actors, which have not been aggregated into the larger above-mentioned categories. The actors are divided by county and the weight of each subcategory is standardized in relation to the size of each national sample. We visualize the weight of each actor as attributes of network nodes. Across the five national networks analyzed, state actors have a very high out-degree compared to other actors. The disaggregated variable shows us that Muslim actors are only one among other actors within the Dutch, the Swiss and the German public discursive arenas. In France and in the United Kingdom, however, Muslim organizations are more proactive than state actors and civil society actors.

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\(^6\) Since our understanding of ‘equal’ closely refers to non-hegemonic, we will use terms such as ‘fair’ or ‘even-handed’ as synonyms throughout the article.
Figure 1: Out-degree of actors (% of each national debate)
Having identified which actors are important in the debate, we would like to analyze another aspect that is generally studied for actors in a media content analysis: the scope. Scope refers both to the sphere of influence of the actor making a claim and to the geographical or political scope of the claim. Figures 2, 3 and 4 show that most actors within the five public arenas aim at the national or the subnational (regional, local) scopes. Figure 2 illustrates that the national level is particularly relevant for state actors in France, the United Kingdom and the Netherlands. German state actors operate at the local level far more frequently than state actors in other countries. In Switzerland, government actors often address Muslim organizations at the cantonal or municipal level and vice versa; for that reason, addressees are rarely unknown.

**Figure 2: Scopes of state actors by countries (%)**

**Figure 3: Scopes of Muslim organizations by countries (%)**
Figure 3 illustrates that the national and local scopes are particularly relevant for Muslim organizations as well. They aim at local scopes more often than state actors do. However, in the Netherlands, Muslim actors address their claims at the supranational, the national and the local levels in an equal way.

Figure 4 illustrates that national scopes are particularly relevant for civil society actors only in the German and the British public debates. In Switzerland, the local scopes are more relevant for civil society actors than other ones. However, a large amount of scopes are unknown.

Cross-national comparisons of public debates in a network perspective
The differences between the national patterns of claim-making are striking. Figures 5 to 9 illustrate the results obtained using DNA. Our DNA data illustrate that Muslim organizations essentially develop different models of relational interactions with other actors across countries. However, we observe that the relation between state actors and Muslim actors is the most important relation among the relations of Muslim organizations even though variations across countries are evident.

Table 1 illustrates how, in general, Muslim organizations play a more passive than an active role in relation to state actors. In France, Muslim organizations are very active and conduct an even-handed dialogue with state actors. The situation in the Netherlands and in the UK is rather similar and Muslim organizations and state actors conduct a rather fair dialogue.

Table 1: Discourse Equality between Muslim organizations and state actors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DE Index</th>
<th>NL</th>
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<th>UK</th>
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<td></td>
<td>-0.06</td>
<td>-0.19</td>
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Furthermore, Muslim organizations also make statements – i.e. make claims without addressing anyone in particular – in a very relevant way in France, the Netherlands and Germany. In Switzerland, however, they prefer focusing on political parties, in order to face the aggressive negative campaign of the successful Swiss people’ party. In the UK, they make fewer statements and choose to address other Muslim organizations. As in the UK, the dialogue within the Islamic community is more relevant in France than in other countries.

**Figure 5: Discursive network on Muslims and Islam in Switzerland (N=678)**

As shown in figure 5, Muslim organizations, state actors and the civil society actors are all involved in the Swiss media debate on Islam. The dialogue between state actors and Muslim organizations is unequal. The relations between the civil society and Muslim organizations, as well as between the civil society and state actors are also unequal. In Switzerland, actors are addressing Muslim organizations more often than vice versa. Muslim organizations address institutions, civil society actors and other Muslim organizations to outline differences in behaviours and ideas among different groups within the Muslim community. We can find a large variety of Muslim organizations claiming in defense of Islamic interests in the Swiss public debate:

- organizations acting at the regional level such as the League of Muslims in Switzerland ("Ligue des musulmans de Suisse"),
- organizations gathering Islamic heterodox groups such as Alevis, e.g. the Federation of Alevis communities in Switzerland ("Fédération des communautés Alévis Suisse"),
- federal organisations that are integrated into the federal interreligious committee such as the Coordination of Islamic organisations in Switzerland ("Koordination Islamischer Organisationen Schweiz", KIOS),
- organizations gathering Muslims by national origin such as the Turkish community of Switzerland ("Türkische Gemeinschaft Schweiz") and
- new radical Islamic organizations.
However, the more relevant actors are the cantonal umbrella organizations such as the Union of Muslim Organizations in Geneva (“Union des organisations musulmanes”) or the federation of the Islamic organizations in Zurich (“Föderation Islamischer Vereine der Schweiz”). In fact, the public debate on Islam is held mainly at the cantonal level. This is true for civil society actors as well. Christian organizations and the media are the most active civil society actors within the Swiss public debate on Islam. Unlike in other countries, the interaction between Muslim organizations and other actors in Switzerland often occurs at the regional or local level to respect the multilevel model of governance. In fact, as Bennani-Chraïbi (2011)’s study shows, Swiss Muslim organizations emerged as a result of a two-sided process. On the one hand, groups organized themselves on the local level to be able to respond to claims and needs coming from Muslims living in the county (proactive process). On the other hand, these groups gathered in bigger umbrella organizations as a result of demands emanating from the state (reactive process). State actors push to find a dialogue partner who is representative of the Muslim community, even though this is quite hard to achieve given the great socio-cultural, ethnic, religious and ideological diversity of Muslims in Switzerland. This result consolidates the idea that each national context affects the interaction of all actors engaged in the public debate on Islamic issues.

Figure 6: Discursive network on Muslims and Islam in United Kingdom (N=1147)

British Muslim organizations and state actors are very present in the debate (see Figure 6). Muslim organizations making claims in the public media discourse in the UK are often recognized associations such as the Muslim Council of Britain and the Muslim Council of Scotland. However, less known groups and formations are still relevant for the public debate in the country. In the UK, the dialogue between Muslim organizations and state actors is much more equal than in Switzerland: Muslim organizations play a more active role. Moreover, Muslim organizations in the UK address other Muslim organizations more often than in other countries. For instance, Muslim organizations address other radical Muslim organizations by criticizing their mode of operation in order to be revalorized by state actors. As a consequence, the dialogue between Muslims organizations and state actors is reinforced through other discursive ties as well. At the same time, Muslim organizations also openly support or criticize political forces and state institutions for their policies concerning Muslims, e.g. repressive state measures in relation to terrorism.
Muslim organizations in the UK develop interactions with other non-Muslim actors on a variety of issues. They play a relevant role in British society – unlike in Germany or in Switzerland. Especially in the last two decades, Muslim organizations are increasingly involved in national and local policies, influencing political parties in taking position about Islamic issues or encouraging Muslims to vote.

In the UK, state actors are less present than in Germany or the Netherlands, but more than in Switzerland and in France (see Table 2 in the Appendix). British state actors address Muslim organizations more often than state actors in other countries do. The government often stigmatizes violent Muslim organizations by differentiating them from the integrated and moderate Muslim associations.

The interactions between Muslim organizations and other actors concern pragmatic problems of the Muslim communities in the country. In the UK, civil society actors address state actors as often as they address other civil society actors. Among civil society actors, the media and professional associations play an important role. The debate between the civil society and Muslim organizations is also relevant.

Figure 7: Discursive network on Muslim and Islam in Germany (N=759)

Muslim organizations are less present in the German debate (see Figure 7). They have an unequal dialogue with state actors. As Azzaoui suggests (2008:40) that “[t]he goal of the Muslim organizations in Germany […] is to achieve equal treatment and the same rights now accorded to the Protestant and Catholic churches as well as officially recognized Jewish communities.” German data show that Muslim actors mostly address state actors and undefined addressees. As Muslim organizations target other Islamic actors, they promote moderate behaviors and discourage the extremist ones.

Conversely, state actors are very dominant and seldom engaged in dialogue with other defined actors. They prefer to make general statements without targeting specific addressees. This strategy engenders mistrust and shortcomings in communication between Muslim
organizations and the state (Laurence and Sturm 2008). German state actors are the most engaged state actors discussing Islamic issues across the studied countries (see Table 2). German governments, legislative and judiciary authorities, police and security agencies, as well as state executive agencies prefer to address the most relevant Muslim associations at the national and the local level such as the Central Council of Muslims in Germany ("Zentralrat der Muslime in Deutschland"), the Islamic Federation in Berlin ("Islamische Föderation in Berlin") and the Islamic Community in Munich ("Türkisch-Islamische Gemeinde zu München") However, most government interventions are statements not addressed to any other actor in particular. Governmental actors often speak about the headscarf and niqab issues, but also about the integration of Islamic pupils in public schools. In several cases, legislative and police actors talk about terrorism and its links with the presence of Muslims in the country. Governmental claims about Islam also concern international relations between the German and the Turkish governments. In fact, German political institutions often interact with Turkish authorities about Islamic courses in schools and imams’ training. Among state actors, governments especially target Turkish and Ahmadiyya Muslim organizations. The majority of these interactions (55.7%) between state actors and Muslim organizations concern governmental actors at the regional and/or the local level. The legislative authorities act repressively against extreme Islamist organizations.

Figure 8: Discursive network on Muslims and Islam in the Netherlands (N=851)

Figure 8 shows that Muslim organizations, state and civil society actors are present in an equal way in the Dutch network. The debate is circular and involves all actors in more or less fair dialogues. The dialogue between state actors and Muslim organizations is relatively fair. In the Netherlands, the presence of the pillarization system structures the dialogue between state and minority actors in a more official and institutionalized way than in other countries. For that reason, the public debate becomes secondary since Muslim umbrella organizations have other arenas where they can address state actors about Islamic issues. In fact, the umbrella organizations are not as relevant as in other countries in the public debate in the Netherlands. Muslim organizations address their members or other Muslim associations in order to coordinate their efforts to claim religious rights in the public sphere. Islamic
coordination or umbrella organizations rarely have defined addressees. Sometimes, in the Netherlands, international Muslim organizations also take position about national and local Islamic issues.

Dutch state and civil society actors are the most active within the public debate about Islamic issues. Like Muslim organizations, they often do not address any actor in particular. Civil society actors address Islamic issues by analyzing the consequences of policies concerning Muslims on the society as a whole.

Dutch state actors, especially the government, claim about very specific and detailed Islamic issues and show much concern for social cohesion. State actors often take position on Geert Wilders’ activities and extreme right parties. In fact, during the period of our study, the murders of Pim Fortuyn in 2002 and of Theo van Gogh in 2004 generated fierce reactions against multicultural principles. Politicians like Rita Verdonk, Ayaan Hirshi Ali and Geert Wilders transformed the public debate by picturing Islam as radical, illiberal and terrorist. Extreme-right parties managed to win the election in 2002 building onto anti-immigrant feelings in the population.

Figure 9: Discursive network on Muslim and Islam in France (N=725)

In the French debate, all the categories of actors mostly make statements instead of engaging in dialogues with each other (see Figure 9). However, Muslim organizations are very active and they conduct a very fair dialogue with state actors.

Before comparing France to other countries, it is important to outline that Muslim organizations are more engaged in France than in Germany (see Table 2). French Muslim organizations are very proactive in the public sphere and address state actors as well as other Muslim organizations. French Muslim organizations make more statements than organizations in other countries by claiming often on general issues related to the concept of secularism.

The role of the Muslim organizations in France can be understood only by considering the important role of civil society in the debate. In France, Muslim organizations, along with civil society actors, occupy a relevant area of the public debate on Islamic issues. Our data illustrate how French civil society actors make more claims about Islam than civil societies in other countries do. For example, researchers and the news media are the two most relevant...
actors in French civil society. Scholars often address general issues and comment on state decisions and policies about Muslims.

State actors are also relevant and either do not address any actor in particular or prefer to directly criticize or support specific Muslim actors. The government’s claims suggest the complexity of the relationship between state actors and Muslim organizations. France has to cope with a colonial past that has influenced its relation with Muslim actors up to the present. For that reason, the Great Mosque of Paris (“Grande mosquée de Partis”), an Islamic organization, which is closely related to the French colonial past, is among the most visible and active Muslim organizations. However, other organizations also mark their presence: the “Conseil français du culte musulman” (CFCM) and the “Conseils régionaux du culte musulman” (CRCM). Both organisations are the result of the French state’s attempt to control the Muslim communities in France.

To sum up, the relational analysis on media content data allows us to outline again how both the national context and network dynamics impact the presence and the discursive strategies of Muslim and state actors. The historical relations between the state and minorities directly influence how often Muslim actors address state actors.

A last interesting observation emerges from the qualitative analysis of the relational data: specific issues seem to mobilize different networks of actors in the same country. For that reason, the interaction between issues and network is an analytical perspective that must be explored in further analyses.

Explaining the different communication patterns

Several factors may account for the diverging communication patterns in the public media discourse on Muslims and Islam observed in our five cases. In this exploratory paper, we would like to enumerate several possible explanations found in the literature, introducing both factors on the macro or national level and possible explanations on the meso or organizational level. They are not to be understood as isolated factors. Indeed, as so often in the social sciences, several factors may account for a given outcome.

Firstly, theories focusing on national citizenship models might give us an explanation on the macro-level. The way host societies understand the integration of newcomers, the rights conferred to them and the attribution of membership status are generally referred to as the national political opportunity structures (POS). Lately, scholars defend a definition of POS that combines both institutional and discursive opportunities, since “opportunities for political mobilization and participation stem not only from the openness or closeness of the institutional setting or the policies enacted by political authorities, but also from the discourses that are prevalent in the public domain through the interventions of policy actors, and of achieving legitimacy in the public discourse” (Cinalli and Giugni 2013a:149-50). POS are conceptualized as a continuum reaching from restrictive policies limiting immigrants’ rights and an understanding of citizenship as a divide along ethnic lines (‘ius sanguinis’) to open institutional and discursive opportunities including facilitated access to citizenship (‘ius soli’) and group rights for minorities. Of course, POS may alter over time due to policy changes. Today, the UK illustrates the ‘multicultural’ citizenship model with very open political opportunity structures, while Germany and Switzerland have the most restrictive institutional and discursive opportunities, thus following an ‘assimilative’ or ‘ethnic-civic’ model of citizenship (Koopmans, et al. 2005:10). France and the Netherlands represent intermediate cases (Cinalli and Giugni 2013a:161). In France, the citizenship model is more
related to the territory (civic-territorial). For a long time, the Netherlands moved towards very open POS until a ‘multicultural backlash’ occurred in the beginning of the new century. Indeed, many studies showed that national citizenship models influence both claim-making by and public representations of immigrants, and, more recently, of Muslims and Islam (Koopmans, et al. 2005, Morales and Giugni 2011, Ruedin and Berkhout 2012, Cinalli and Giugni 2013a, Cinalli and Giugni 2013b). Until now, authors claim that the relative openness of political opportunity structures in a country influences the presence and the behavior of migrant actors (Helbling 2010) or the presence of Muslim actors in the public space, their collective mobilization (as well as the form of mobilization) and the salience of religious demands (Cinalli and Giugni 2013a:148). Cinalli and Giugni (2013b), for instance, show that open opportunity structures favor a more active participation of Muslim actors in the public media debate. They observe that “[… Muslims, particularly in Belgium, Britain and France] stand out as protagonists in the public space rather than being simple objects of discourses and actions by other actors” (Cinalli and Giugni 2013b:136-37).

However straightforward the POS theory, it does not succeed to explain why the observed communication patterns in France and the United Kingdom are so similar. A second possibility to explain these differences might be to focus on historical reasons for the recognition or non-recognition of minorities. Silvestri (2007:170), for example, states that the historical development of the relationship between the state and the church still shapes the state’s handling of religious minorities. “ […] the way states have developed their relations with religious groups is still shaped by corporatist models and by the traditional pattern of church-state relations […]”. According to Dolezal, et al. (2010), the nature of the church-state relation in a country heavily influences the current media discourse on Muslims and Islam in Europe. In fact, in each country analyzed, we can find a different system of church-state relations: the pillarization system in the Netherlands, the German church-state cooperation for taxes and privileges, the variance of state-church relations across England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland in the United Kingdom, the laicité in France, as well as the 26 cantonal models of state-church relations in Switzerland. Each of these national models has a strong effect on the modalities of Islamic accommodation. In fact, these models generate different problems of accommodation such as the veil in public schools in France or the financing of Islamic schools in the Netherlands. Consequently, each model of state-church relationship creates opportunities for state actors, Muslim organizations and civil society actors to claim against or in favor of specific rights. Church-state relations can thus indirectly influence patterns of communication and the role played by the different actors in national public discourses.

Thirdly, we cannot avoid observing that the strong colonialist history of France and the United Kingdom has affected the relation between state actors and Muslim organizations in a very relevant way. As mentioned above, the Great Mosque in Paris and Muslim organizations conserve a privileged relation with the state actors as an effect of the colonial legacy.

It goes without saying that looking at cross-national differences in a macro-perspective does not exclude also taking factors on the meso-level into consideration. Apart from institutional opportunities and church-state relations, a fourth set of explanations might be found at the level of the Muslim organizations themselves. Muslims might not have the same level of organizational activity in every country under study. According to Schrover and Vermeulen (2005), immigrants’ organizational activity depends on the size of the immigrant community and on the institutional opportunities of the
country they live in. A too small or too large number of members in a community might cause problems to maintain a functioning organization. Too much or too little competition by the state might also lead to reduced activity. Furthermore, the type of activity might depend on the nature of the organization. Indeed, we saw that our definition of organization comprises a wide range of associations and informal groups. The aim of these organizations is to achieve certain goals common to most participants. Tasks might include gathering, organizing, and helping members of their communities, especially for religious or other activities, as well as representing the interests of the community in the public sphere (Bennani-Chraïbi 2011). Ethnic association may prioritize other activities than religious organizations and participate to the public media discourse in a different or less frequent way.

The presence or absence of an umbrella organization might also have an important impact on the role and importance of the Muslims’ voice in public discourse, as well as their communication with state actors: “In absence of Muslim institutions with a wide recognition and legitimacy from across the variety of Muslim communities, European governments have experienced considerable difficulty in relating to and addressing the needs of their Muslim populations” (Silvestri 2007:170).

Lastly, since our study specifically focuses on the discursive network as represented by the media – as opposed to real-life networks between actors – the access of Muslim organizations to the media might be a crucial factor for explaining the observed differences between countries. As has been shown for other interest groups (e.g. Binderkrantz 2012), the access to the media is influenced by different media systems. However, Muslim organizations themselves might be reticent to participate in the public media discourse, because they do not want to draw attention to an already heated debate. Some studies based on qualitative interviews with Muslim leaders come to the conclusion that avoiding the media spotlight might be one of the strategies used by Muslim organizations (van Heelsum 2003, Bennani-Chraïbi 2011, van Heelsum and Koomen 2011).

**Conclusion: looking at the whole picture**

Based on the recurrent claim that Muslim actors have too little opportunities for making their voice heard in the Western European public media discourse on Muslims and Islam, this paper intended to investigate Muslim actors’ role and importance in this debate. The research was conducted with two goals in mind; firstly, we wanted to show the relative weight of Muslim organizations, as well as their interactions with state actors in the public media discourse. Secondly, we wanted to underline the advantages of applying social network analysis tools to quantitative media content data. As other authors (Adam 2008, Janning, et al. 2009) have shown before us, discourse network analysis allows to go beyond static frequency analyses and put forward the dynamic nature of discourse data. Indeed, actors participating in a debate do not do so in total isolation from each other, but adapt their discursive strategies in relation to others.

The results from the discursive network analysis show that the relation between state actors and Muslim organizations is the strongest one between two actors of the national discourse networks. This result is not very surprising since state actors are Muslim organizations’ ‘official’ dialogue partners and should indeed engage in dialogue. However, this dialogue did not always seem to be conducted in equal terms. In the Netherlands, France and the United Kingdom, Muslim organizations and state actors conduct an even-handed dialogue, while the latter is less equal in Germany and Switzerland. This study being a first explorative overlook
on the communication patterns in public media discourse in five countries, no hypotheses explaining these differing relations were tested. However, several factors on the macro and meso levels are discussed in order to assess their relevance in the explanation of the different network structures found in our analysis.

With regard to the two goals we wanted to pursue in this paper, we found, firstly, that Muslim organizations are better able to make their voice heard in certain countries than in others. We claim that it is not very prolific to look at actors individually in public discourse analysis since actors do not act independently from each other. Taking into account the relations between actors allows one to get a more dynamic understanding of the claim-making processes. In order to make this possible methodologically, we used a relatively new method called discursive network analysis, which allows combining social network analysis tools with data from quantitative content analysis. This method could indeed reveal itself very useful to render quantitative discourse analysis less static, concentrating not only on the ‘nodes’, but also on the ‘ties’ of the discursive network.

Further research is needed to investigate the possibilities of analyzing the dynamics of public media discourse at the level of the interactions between actors, reaching beyond the focus on individual actors. New methodological tools now allow us to abandon our blinders and to start looking at the whole picture.
References


Appendix

Table 2: Presence of actors claiming about Muslims and Islam

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Table 3: Muslim organizations’ claims by addressees (% on the total claims of Muslim organizations in each country)

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Table 4: State actors’ claims by addressees (% on the total claims of state actors in each country)

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